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ABSTRACT

The Council of Chief State School Officers defines career education as "essentially an instructional strategy, aimed at improving educational outcomes by relating teaching and learning activities to the concept of career development. Career education extends the academic world to the world of work. In scope, career education encompasses educational experiences beginning with early childhood and continuing throughout the individual's productive life. A complete program of career education includes an awareness of self and the world of work, broad orientation to occupations (professional and nonprofessional), in depth exploration of selected (occupational) clusters, career preparation, an understanding of the economic systems of which jobs are a part, and placement for all students." In addition, the council believes that career education is for all learners, is in all levels of education, includes all work (paid and unpaid), includes the total community, and is lifetime education. It represents a concept that actively involves students, parents, educators, and the community. It is not a separate program, but rather a concept that is integrated into and throughout the existing educational structure. Career education offers the emphasis and the means to deliver educational experiences which prepare individuals for a changing and increasingly complex society. (Author/EA)

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CAREER EDUCATION

A Position Statement of the Council of Chief State School Officers

(Prepared by the Committee on Career Education and a Special Task Force of the project, "Strengthening State Leadership in Career Education")

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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F O R E W O R D

The process of transition from childhood to adulthood--the process of growing up--has never been an easy one. But it is somewhat paradoxical that, in an era in which exists an abundance of knowledge, sophisticated technology, and virtually instantaneous communications devices or techniques, the process of transition from childhood to adulthood remains difficult.

Young people, because of the modern devices with which they are surrounded, are literally inundated with facts, information, and other necessary "tools" even before they enter the formal school setting. It has been observed, with a high degree of validity, that youngsters entering the first grade today do so with more basic knowledge than many high school graduates of a generation or two ago possessed when they left the high school environment. In similar fashion, first-graders today are highly conversant with the numerous components of a technology that was only dreamed of a generation or two ago.

In short, the young people in our schools and society are rich with information. And as a result, one might assume that the transition from youth to adulthood would be made easier. Yet this is not the case.

With all of the apparent positive aspects of their environment, together with the abundance of knowledge and information, many young people in our schools and society remain experience poor. Children and youth, whether by design or accident, are often not involved in adult kinds of activities--activities that are needed to help young people to better understand themselves, their education, their relationship with society, and their relationship to the world of work.

Young people often experience difficulty in determining who they are, where they want to be going, and how they might expect to get to where they want to be. The schools must be able and willing to assist the young people to develop an awareness, but the schools alone--the insulated and isolated classroom--cannot be expected to accomplish the task. Those elements of society that are external to the schools, but which are an integral part of the young person's life, must also be brought into the educational process. The home, the family, the community, the business/labor/industry/professional segments of society--all must assume and accept the important roles which are theirs, and help young people experience those activities that will develop the needed awareness and attitudes, and which will provide rational bases for the choices--decisions--that young and old alike are called upon to make as they proceed through their life careers.

It goes without saying that the cost of providing an education that is suited neither to the needs of the individual nor to those of society is high. But while the immediate cost to society is high, the long-range costs assume even more gargantuan proportions. Every individual who cannot cope with self, with education, and with the world of work causes extremely valuable, and not unlimited, resources to be drained from society. Unemployment lines, welfare agencies, drug centers, and corrections institutions are filled with individuals who have not been provided with the experiences which are needed in order to prepare one to meet and overcome challenges, and to truly allow the individual an opportunity to become producing as well as contributing member of society. Clearly, this type of condition cannot be tolerated in our modern society.

Career Education, as a major emphasis in American education, represents a response to the call for basic changes in the educational system that are urgently needed. In the relatively brief time since the concept was introduced, it has been met with a very high degree of acceptance. The Council of Chief State School Officers believes that the concept of Career Education offers considerable promise for resolving some of the problems that have led to a call for reforms in American education. The Council is therefore pleased to issue the position statement contained in these pages.

C A R E E R E D U C A T I O N What is it?

Career Education is essentially an instructional strategy, aimed at improving educational outcomes by relating teaching and learning activities to the concept of career development. Career Education extends the academic world to the world of work. In scope, Career Education encompasses educational experiences beginning with early childhood and continuing throughout the individual's productive life. A complete program of Career Education includes an awareness of self and the world of work, broad orientation to occupations (professional and non-professional), in-depth exploration of selected (occupational) clusters, career preparation, an understanding of the economic system of which jobs are a part, and placement for all students.

While it is not likely--or desirable--that all people would agree <u>what</u> should be learned in the name of education, most would likely agree that there are several basic purposes inherent in the educational process. The educational process should provide every learner with opportunities:

- To acquire the basic skills essential to all other learning;
- To develop the ability to think in a rational manner;

- To be able to understand how wise choices or decisions are made; and
- To develop those attitudes essential to a productive, rewarding, and satisfying life.

The Council of Chief State School Officers subscribes to the purposes of education, and believes that Career Education, as defined in the opening paragraph above, will provide a vehicle that can lead to accomplishment of the purposes. In addition, the Council believes that:

CAREER EDUCATION IS FOR ALL LEARNERS

Career Education is not for any one economic, social, ethnic, or ability group. It is for learners of ALL economic, social, and ethnic backgrounds. It is for ALL levels of ability. It is learner centered, and seeks to achieve the goals of justice and equality of opportunity in education.

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CAREER EDUCATION IS IN ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION

Career Education is included from kindergarten through university education and in adult continuing education. It is infused into the regular curriculum and it enriches the traditional disciplines.

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CAREER EDUCATION INCLUDES ALL WORK -- BOTH PAID AND UNPAID

Career Education provides job-entry skills to all learners prior to or upon leaving the educational system. It provides awareness of all occupations and professions. It provides preparation for those occupations requiring minimal knowledge and skills and those professions requiring very high levels of specialized competence.

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CAREER EDUCATION INCLUDES THE TOTAL COMMUNITY

The environment and resources for Career Education include both the school and the total community. Education does not take place in a vacuum. Learning occurs at all times. No single agency or institution should attempt to assume full responsibility for all aspects of education.

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CAREER EDUCATION IS LIFETIME EDUCATION

Career Education is education that is intended to meet career needs at every stage during one's life.

C A R E E R E D U C A T I O N Who is involved?

Since Career Education represents a concept whose general purpose is to provide students with a better education, then it is only fitting that students be the primary clients (or beneficiaries) of this new effort. And students are, indeed, the target audience for Career Education. However, in order for students to be exposed to Career Education concepts, various other groups must be actively involved. These include:

STUDENTS

Career Education is designed to provide ALL students--including adult learners--with a more credible, realistic and functional learning experience throughout the school system. Career Education concepts are for first graders...for fifth graders...for twelfth graders...for community college students...for technical training students...for university undergraduates...and for adult and continuing learners. Career Education is for all students--regardless of intellectual ability, economic background, race, or ethnic origin.

PARENTS

One of the basic premises upon which Career Education is based is that parents will become actively involved with school activities and projects. Parents are increasingly playing a collaborative role by emphasizing the home, in part, as a family work place and as a major influence in life careers. Additionally, through Career Education efforts, parents are becoming increasingly more involved in such cooperative capacities as guest speakers, teacher aides, career observation tour chaperones, and as members of active advisory councils. Not only do parents represent a rich resource of talent and knowledge, but participation of parents in school activities has a tremendous positive psychological and motivational effect on their own children.

EDUCATORS

Career Education ideas cannot be implemented without the understanding and interest by classroom teachers, building principals, district superintendents, and school board members. And understanding how Career Education can be of benefit to the students is not something the educational community can be expected to know by osmosis. Teachers at all grade levels and in all subject areas (as well as counselors and administrators) must be provided with opportunities to attend orientation seminars, in-service workshops and other activities designed to acquaint them with the techniques and potential of Career Education. Career Education is not keyed towards any particular subject areas--academic classes, social studies, vocational programs, and fine arts classes should all tie in with and impact on Career Education. Therefore, ALL teachers need to be involved with implementing Career Education within their regular subject areas.

COMMUNITY

A significant part of Career Education has to do with providing students with meaningful understanding and awareness of the world of work. In order to accomplish that, representatives from business, industry, and organized labor must become tuned in to the needs of Career Education and need to be willing to provide continual support in the form of observation tour sites, guest speakers, instructional aides and materials, work stations for on-the-job training programs, assistance in developing new curriculum and individuals to serve on community advisory councils. Career Education cannot be implemented with any great success unless community support is active, enthusiastic and aggressive.

It should be clear that Career Education is not perceived as just another program existing in isolation of the rest of the school process. Career Education is a concept that is integrated into and throughout the existing educational structure--in all subjects, for all students, and involving parents, teachers and the community at large.

C A R E E R E D U C A T I O N Why?

Throughout the history of our nation, the efforts of both youth and adults to identify and engage in activities that contributed to their own well-being have been, by and large, through their life's work.

Our nation, however, is now in the midst of a worldwide revolution in technology that is causing major changes in both values and in standards of living--in essence, major changes in lifestyles.

The accelerated rate of change challenges education specifically to provide all individuals with more assistance in developing an ability to cope with the changing lifestyles and to contribute, in productive and satisfying ways, to the society in which they live. This challenge calls for every effort that will increase the ability of individuals to develop their own potential, to contribute not only to their own well-being but to the well-being of their society.

A major purpose of education must be that of facilitating the career development of the individual it serves. Career Education provides the stimulation and support for those specific educational objectives which assure that each student has an opportunity to become more productive and satisfied through the way he or she contributes goods or services--the job(s) held (paid or unpaid).

Career Education offers to the educational community and to the community at large the stimulation, the emphasis and the means to deliver educational experiences which prepare individuals for a changing and increasingly complex society.

C A R E E R E D U C A T I O N A Lifelong Process

The concept of Career Education will not be new to the many discerning individuals who recognize and understand that learning is a lifelong process, and that no one, either consciously or unconsciously, can stop learning. Career Education is an instructional strategy designed to meet the career development needs of all individuals. It therefore must be provided for individuals at varying stages of life.

Career Education is predicated on a belief that both education and the work that education prepares us for can be meaningful, satisfying, and rewarding to our lives. It is also based on an assumed ability to create a learning environment that meets the career needs of young people and adults in all settings--and at any point in their lives. Such an environment would make educational opportunities--at all levels--available to every individual wishing to learn, whether for vocational purposes or for avocational pursuits.

The "open door" policy of Career Education acknowledges that individuals change occupations or jobs three to five times during their careers, either because of personal changes or changes in the employment market. Career Education will assist individuals in developing competencies and acquiring skills needed at every successive career stage.